



# 1-109TH SOLDIERS PROVIDE SECURITY FOR VICE PRESIDENT

*By Sgt. Charity Lewis*

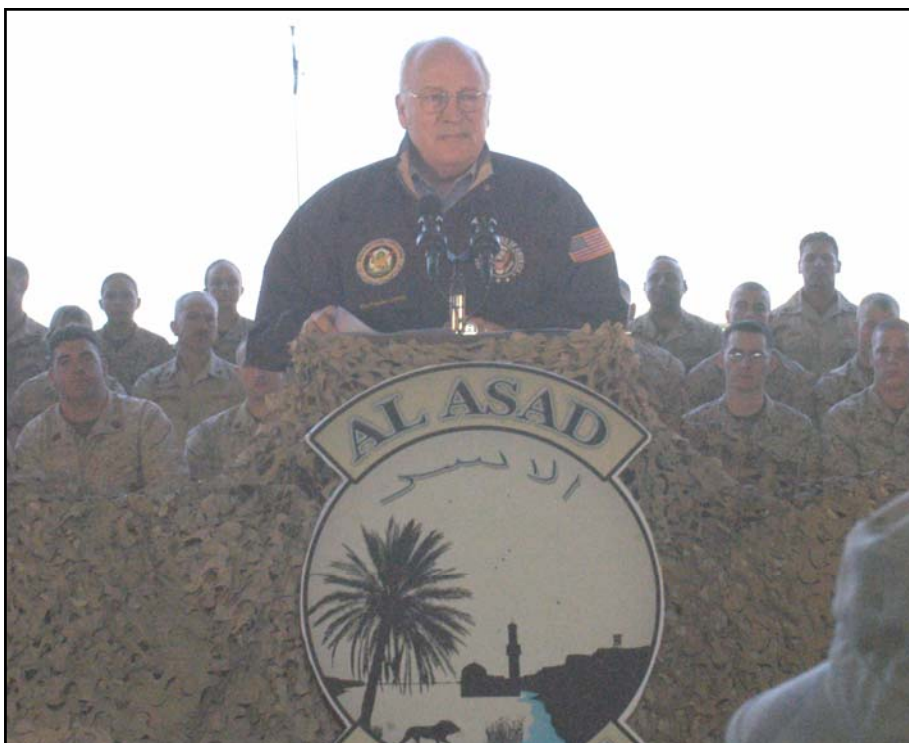
"Our goal is victory, and with you in the fight, our goal is certain." These were the words Vice President Dick Cheney relayed to Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines at Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

It was a surprise visit, most of the military personnel on the base had no idea who was coming to see them; the only instruction they received was that it would be a V.I.P.

Security was heightened for the base as Soldiers of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 109<sup>th</sup> Infantry from Scranton, PA. were assigned the task of security for the Vice President.

Colonel John L. Gronski, Commander of the 2/28 BCT, was making his own visit as well. I was fortunate enough to accompany Col. Gronski on this momentous occasion. We headed out to see the Soldiers that were working in the towers that guard the base. Our day began with a tour of the base which now houses about 14,000 military personnel.

Along the way, we stopped to talk to Soldiers and Marines as they stood their post. Col. Gronski took a few minutes to talk to each one, shake their hands, pat them on the back, and in some instances,



“Our goal is victory, and with you in the fight, our goal is certain,” said Vice President Dick Cheney, as he praised the hard work and sacrifices being made by Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen during his surprise visit to Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

*Photo by Sgt. Charity Lewis*

were not allowed to drive up to the hangar, so we traveled on foot, once again stopping to greet every Soldier and Marine along the way.

When we arrived, military personnel lined the building, standing on Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Humvees in order to get a view of the unknown visitor.

Vice President Cheney arrived and immediately took his place behind the microphone.

He delivered a brief message from President Bush, and assisted in awarding two young Marines the Bronze Star Medal for valor.

bestow upon them the coveted 2 BCT coin. Each and every Soldier and Marine received a sincere and heartfelt “thank you”.

I talked to several Soldiers of the 109<sup>th</sup> and all had the same response; they never thought that they would be responsible for the security of the Vice President of United States of America.

When our tour of the base ended, we headed off to the aircraft area. Vehicles

According to Captain Andrew Inch, Base Defense Operations, his section was responsible for all the security and Military Police activities on the base.

"We were the ones that were monitoring and tracking Vice President Cheney's visit. It was more intense than usual but a pretty standard mission. It went pretty smooth, with no issues as far as security goes," Inch stated.

# A MESSAGE FROM IRON 6



COL (P) John L. Gronski

To All Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen of the Iron Brigade,

I am extremely proud of the awesome job all of you did in AO Topeka in 2005. Because of your hard work we have helped neutralize the insurgency and set the conditions that enabled the citizens of Ramadi and the surrounding areas to cast their vote as they create a new, democratic government. All the sacrifices you have made are paying dividends. Through your efforts, freedom is blossoming in this country and our families and friends back home are safe from the danger of terrorism.

It is a privilege to serve with all of you great Americans. I recognize that each and every one of you have volunteered to wear the combat uniform and put yourself at risk to defend our country. Our nation is much safer because of your selfless service. There will be a day in the future when your children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews will look at you with pride because of the great work you have done here. As 2005 passes into the history books, know that you are part of this history. When historians write about Operation

Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terror, we will be a prominent part of the chapter that includes 2005 and 2006.

The Iron Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen of the 2/28 BCT have my utmost respect and the gratitude of millions of your fellow Americans back home. I wish all of you a very Happy and Safe New Year and I wish all of our families and supporters a very prosperous and Happy New Year.

While we keep getting stronger, the insurgents are getting weaker!

Col. John L. Gronski

## 1-109TH PROVIDES SECURITY FOR VICE PRESIDENT

Continued from cover.

Captain Peter West of the 1-109<sup>th</sup> headed up the mission for security. They weren't informed on who was coming but due to the short notice and additional security requirements, they knew it was someone very important.

They began by completing a reconnaissance of the entire area, to include setting up additional check points and removing all third country nationals and contract civilians.

Bomb sniffing K-9 units were utilized and several parts of the base were blocked off to traffic.

"All of the elements that participated in the security of the Vice President's visit are currently assigned to the 109<sup>th</sup>.

We feel honored to have been involved to such an extent, in such a high-profile visit, and we are very proud of our personnel who participated in the event," stated West.

West gave great praise to his Soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 109<sup>th</sup> Infantry, stating they are blessed with highly professional Soldiers, and attached Marines, Airmen and Sailors.



Col. Gronski spends time with some of the Soldiers from 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 109<sup>th</sup> Infantry at Al Asad Air Base. The 109<sup>th</sup> Soldiers provided heightened security for the Vice President's visit. Left to Right - Staff Sgt. James Bindeman, Col. John Gronski, Cpl. Leo Russo, Spc. Mark Clayton, Staff Sgt. Aurthur Bronson and Spc. Matthew Taggart.

Photo by Sgt. Charity Lewis

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### MAILING ADDRESSES FOR :

**Ar-Ramadi**  
Soldiers Name  
Soldiers Unit  
Camp Ar-Ramadi  
APO, AE 09362-9997

**Habbaniyah / Taqaddum**  
Soldiers Name  
Soldiers Unit  
Camp Taqaddum  
APO, AE 09381

**Al Asad**  
Soldiers Name  
Soldiers Unit  
Camp Al Asad  
APO, AE 09333

Please take into consideration, when mailing perishables: mail could take up to two weeks to reach Soldiers.

# OPERATIONS FOR A SECURE ELECTION DAY

By SGT. Julie Nicolov



A group of Iraqi voters show off their fingers as they walk by. They carried a poster supporting one of the local politicians.  
Photo by Sgt. First Class Richard Scaricaciottoli

"Every citizen up there was touched by democracy somehow."

But Ramadi, which is the lower left corner of the Sunni Triangle, hadn't experienced that kind of democracy. A low turnout of voters in January and October meant

that no one knew what their local government could do for them.

"The average person in Ramadi is saying, 'what has democracy done for me? I have no one I can bring my troubles to,'" Roggeman said. "We've got to get the government line of operations running."

However, before the citizens of Ramadi could get out and vote, they needed to know that it was safe for them to leave their houses.

"Particularly with the Ramadi area, there's a lot of fighting. In one day, we killed 70 insurgents. That tells you how many were attacking so you have a point of reference for how bad that fight was," said Maj. Earl Higgins, operations officer, 2-69 Armor.

The insurgents increased their fire power over the summer and through the month of Ramadan, culminating during a two-prong attack on an entry control point manned by Task Force Soldiers in the Sufia district.

On Sept. 15, approximately 150 insurgents attacked one of the battalion's entry control points. The Soldiers pushed them back with firepower from their individual weapons and Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

Two weeks later, on Oct. 3, the insurgents attacked the ECP again. In that firefight, two Americans were slightly wounded, while Roggeman estimates that the enemy lost 70.

"I think the numbers show the insurgents better not mess with the tanks and the Bradleys," Roggeman said.

Firepower, according to Roggeman, is not the insurgency's strong point.

"Militarily, these terrorists aren't that good," Roggeman said. "The enemy's center of gravity is the American people and the American will to fight."

The city has been relatively quiet since Oct. 3.

In late October, the battalion moved the troops who had manned the entry control point to a dangerous stretch of Route Michigan. Since then, improvised explosive device attacks on that route have decreased by half.

"The guys are doing great things," Higgins said.

The Soldiers of 2nd Bn., 69th Armor Regt. are preparing to return to the States in the coming months. Soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division's 1st Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, replaced them.

Eventually, the responsibility of keeping Iraq secure will fall on the shoulders of the Iraqi Army.

During every operation conducted by American troops, there is an Iraqi Army element by their side.

"I've been partnered with three different Iraqi Army battalions and all three have been very good," Roggeman said.

The work done by the task force as well as their mere presence in the city has helped that process.

"I think the people know that the American people are here and are contributing to increased security in their area," Higgins said. "When they see the vehicles drive through everyday, they see you get blown up but still coming back. When we pulled 30 IEDs back during *Operation Rams*, there were 30 less bombs to go off."

As a result of all that work, the citizens of Ramadi have the opportunity to improve the future of their city.

"The Ramadi people have a chance to join the democratic process, lay down their arms and pursue peace and prosperity," Roggeman said of the elections.

A strong local government may mean a dissolved insurgency as well.

RAMADI, Iraq — The Soldiers of Task Force 2-69 Armor have spent the last six months raiding insurgent safe houses, patrolling streets, and discovering weapons caches in preparation for Iraq's first parliament election.

Ramadi, the capital of the Al Anbar province and one of the most dangerous cities in the country, has been painted as an insurgency stronghold.

Voter turnout for the Oct. 15 constitutional referendum was low in Ramadi. The task force, comprised of Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment; Pennsylvania Army National Guardsmen from Animal Company, 3rd Battalion, 103rd Armor Regiment; a platoon of Soldiers from 876th Engineer Battalion and other elements were doing their part to raise that number.

To Lt. Col. Robert Roggeman, commander, 2nd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, a successful election in Ramadi will work wonders to create a peaceful city.

"The number one criterion to getting rid of the insurgency is the legitimacy of the local government," Roggeman said.

The battles that his task force and Iraqi Soldiers have fought paved the way for a peaceful election day.

Roggeman's tankers and infantrymen rolled into Ramadi in July after spending six months in the relatively quiet Diyala region where they helped the citizens make the best of their local government.

"We put the local government in charge. They had a mayor who ran the council and we put all the projects through them. It was really democracy at the grassroots level," Roggeman said.



# HISTORIC VIDEO CONFERENCE

by Capt. Alfred A. Smith



Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell and The Adjutant General of PA, Maj. Gen. Jessica Wright, express their appreciation and dedication to the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen who are currently deployed in Iraq.

"I think it's real important that our troops know that people back home haven't forgotten them. We're trying to do things to help their lives when they return -- to make their lives easier," Rendell said. Gov. Rendell congratulated Gov. Ma'moun on his recent success of the December 15 elections, especially the success achieved in Al Anbar. He

**CAMP RAMADI, Iraq** — The Governor of Pennsylvania, Ed Rendell, and the Governor of Al Anbar, Ma'moun Sami Rasheed, conducted an historic Video Television Conference (VTC) on Thursday December 22, 2005.

The 30 Minute VTC was the first of this type for both governors, by linking Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania and Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

Gov. Rendell, The Adjutant General of PA Maj. Gen. Jessica Wright, Sergeant Mathew Chase, and various politicians took part in the teleconference from Pennsylvania. Accompanying Gov. Ma'moun from Camp Ramadi were Brig. Gen. James L. Williams, Deputy Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, Col. John L. Gronski, 2/28 BCT Commander, and Soldiers of the Iron Brigade stationed at Camp Ramadi.

Everyone in attendance witnessed Gov. Rendell sign two bills into law. The first bill signed was Senate Bill 869 which extends health care coverage to deployed Soldiers until they've finished their college studies, even if they go past the age of 23.

The second bill signed was Senate Bill 358 which extends the period of time for which deployed Soldiers can receive free tuition to attend Pennsylvania's state-owned universities. The bill gives at least one additional year of eligibility for benefits so that deployed Soldiers can receive educational assistance grants for six rather than five years.

National Guard Sergeant, Matthew Chase, from Scranton came up with the idea after returning from his deployment with Task Force Dragoon.

applauded Gov. Ma'moun's efforts in bringing order and democracy to Ramadi.

Gov. Ma'moun, who communicated through the use of an interpreter, was delighted to be allowed to take part in this historic event and expressed to Gov. Rendell that the help he has received from the Coalition Forces has been overwhelming.

Gov Ma'moun offered a gesture of friendship to Gov. Rendell when he bestowed to Gov. Rendell an invitation to visit Al Anbar, Iraq.

**Gov. Rendell congratulated Gov. Ma'moun on his recent success of the December 15 elections, especially the success achieved in Al Anbar.**

Upon the closing of the VTC, Governor Rendell said there is more to do. He wants a larger benefits package for deployed Soldiers. He said many Soldiers make far less when they're deployed. Rendell wants to give tax breaks to employers of Soldiers so they can make up the difference in the salary while their employees are on duty with the military.

by 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

# LIFE AND SACRIFICE ON CHRISTMAS

**HABBANIYAH, IRAQ** – On Christmas morning, the servicemen and women stationed at Camp Habbaniyah gathered to honor their fallen comrades.

Brigadier General James L. Williams, Deputy Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Division, Lt. Col. Loris Lepri, Commander of Task Force Panther and CW05 Walker, Chief Gunner of Division Schools at Habbaniyah led the celebration. On this brisk Christmas morning in Iraq, all gathered to dedicate the five newly constructed firing ranges to select Soldiers and Marines who have made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. Major (Chaplain) Etter remarked, "It is only appropriate to honor our brothers in arms, celebrating their life and dedication on the very day we celebrate the birth of our Savior."

The five ranges constructed by members of the 8<sup>th</sup> ESB (Engineer Support



Brig. Gen. James L. Williams and service members of TF 1-110<sup>th</sup> IN share in the official dedication of the 300 meter range in honor of Staff Sergeant Ryan Scott Ostrom.  
Photo submitted by 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

Battalion) assisted by Task Force Panther's 135<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company were dedicated to Staff Sergeant Ryan Ostrom of B Co. 109<sup>th</sup> Infantry assigned to C Co 103<sup>rd</sup> Armor, Sergeant Brian Dunlap, Marine advisor to 4<sup>th</sup> Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division Iraqi Army, Gunnery Sergeant Darrell

Boatman, EOD team leader at Habbaniyah, Sergeant Joshua Terando, assigned to Task Force Panther QRF, and Specialist Timothy Brown of B Co. 125<sup>th</sup> Infantry. Gen. Williams commended the Marines of 8<sup>th</sup> ESB for their hard work and tireless effort forth to build and expand the range complex at Habbaniyah.

All Marines, Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Civilians alike took a moment to reflect on the selfless service and devotion of each man honored today. Especially on Christmas, a most cherished holiday for Americans, the spirit of these great warriors was felt by all. The ranges are a testament to their courage and dedication and the new complex will serve as a lasting reminder that freedom has its price. These new ranges fulfill the need for quality weapons training and precision marksmanship, allowing both US and Iraqi troops to maintain and strengthen the fundamental skills of combatant operations.

## SOLDIER BECOMES CITIZEN

By Staff Sgt. James Avery

Sgt. Norman Madsen was born in the village of Badvenzabern, Germany. In 1969 he moved to the United States, where five years later he joined the United States Army. After a break in service he realized how much he missed the Army and joined the Pennsylvania Army National Guard in 1991. He is currently serving as a mechanic with HHC 876 EN at Camp Ar Ramadi, Iraq. Last year Sgt. Madsen applied for citizenship, and after the normal waiting process of 6-8 months he received his interview and his application was approved.

A ceremony was held on December 20, 2005 at Camp Victory, Multi National Corp HQ where he was sworn in as a naturalized citizen. Also in attendance were 66 other Soldiers being naturalized. At the ceremony, LTG Vines, MNC-I Commander gave a speech on what it means to be an American.

Sgt. Madsen also re-enlisted for six more years which will bring him to 20 years of service at which time he will be eligible to collect retirement benefits at age 60.

There are currently five other Soldiers who will also be making the trip to Camp



Sgt. Norman Madsen, a Soldier with the 2/28 BCT and citizen of Germany sits with other Soldiers who have decided to become part of the country they serve so proudly.  
Photo by Staff Sgt. Julie Nicolov

Victory to become citizens. Ceremonies are held every four months, the next one to be held in April 2006. If there are any Soldiers interested in becoming a naturalized citizen they can visit the INS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). They will need to complete forms N-400, N-426 and G-325B. Please use the fill able form ver-

sion. When finished bring all completed forms to the PSB located in the ALOC building. At this point all forms will be reviewed for accuracy and the three copies N-426 will be notarized. Next step is travel to Camp Victory for final processing. Stop by or call SSG Avery regarding any questions you have in becoming a citizen, 521-0314.



# LASTING MEMORIES

by Maj. Joseph Benevento

"An American Soldier gave me a chocolate bar. I will never forget that", the elderly German gentleman told me as we drank our beers at the Oktoberfest in Munich, Germany.

There are times when the smallest acts of kindness are remembered for a lifetime.

With this in the back of my mind, I set off with the Marines of Team 6, 6th Civil Affairs Group (6th CAG) and a Squad from the Iraqi Army (3-1-7 IA). We headed to the Al Raheen School in central Jazirah. Our mission today was to drop off more than 200 backpacks, filled with school supplies, to the girls at the school (the boys, who attend school earlier in the day, received their backpacks last week). SGT Charity Lewis from the Brigade S-5 Office (Civil Affairs) joined us as well as SPC Hackett from the 228th FSB. SPC Hackett helped in handing out school supplies, toys, and candies to the children; items donated by her church back home in the U.S.

Riding in three Up-Armored HUMVEEs and a Cargo HUMVEE, we met up with the Iraqi Army Squad at a heavily defended strongpoint almost a kilometer from the school. After last minute coordination and a bit of mugging for the camera, our group began our dismounted patrol towards the school.

**Smiles were available in abundant quantities, whether it was enjoying a new backpack, school supplies, or a unique photo**

Dogs barked wildly, and children spilled out of homes to watch as we walked by. After stopping at a home along the way (gathering 'atmospherics' of the area), we eventually arrived at the school. The Iraqi Army Soldiers moved



One class checks out their new backpack and supplies. While other students show off their photos.

Photo by Maj. Joseph Benevento

around the school and 'secured' the site for us. Led by MAJ Hendrix of the 6th CAG, we entered the school grounds and spoke briefly with the school's Headmaster, Mr. Abed. While waiting for the HUMVEE to arrive with the supplies, we spoke of repairs we were hoping to make at the school (which was damaged during a firefight between insurgents and U.S. forces during the summer).

In the background, we could hear the girls shouting as the teachers led them in their lessons. Shouting the answer, in unison, seems to be particularly enjoyable; and the girls smiled broadly when we looked in on a class.

Within five minutes of our arrival, the boys were completely unsettled. The girls, however, were a bit more restrained.

Some of the teachers had excellent control over their classes, and continued teaching, seemingly uninterrupted by the Soldiers' visit. Other classes, however, lost all semblance of order, as the kids crowded near the door, pushing and shoving each other to get a closer look. Admittedly, their teachers were outside their classrooms, watching us, or were in with the Headmaster, organizing things.

I popped my head into one of the classes, and watched as the class filled in numbers on the Chalkboard. One by one, volunteers would go to the Chalkboard and fill in a sequential square. As soon as someone stopped in to take photos of the girls at the Chalkboard, nearly every girl raised her hand to vol-

unteer.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi Soldiers were setting up the boxes of backpacks and donated supplies. In a rare twist, a Shiite officer handed the Sunni Headmaster the Iraqi Flag, who in turn handed it to a Kurdish Soldier to display on the roof of the school.

At times, it is difficult to see the progress that this country is making. But for me, this was a pretty big step, despite the fact that not many people were there to witness it.

As is true with most of the "Joint Patrols" that we undertake with the Iraqi Soldiers, we try to let them lead and put on an "Iraqi Face" to our operations. While teachers and parents might realize the handouts were from Americans, the children just know that we delivered them together, side by side. It's interesting to watch the young children's hesitancy fall away as an Iraqi Soldier encourages them. Something about speaking the language, I guess . . .

One of the most exciting aspects of this backpack delivery is the fact that we had numerous Polaroid Cameras and extra film floating around for photo ops. SGT Lewis, working with the Polaroid Company, arranged for us to have them available during this mission. Soldiers snapped photos of the children, other Soldiers, and teachers, capturing the excitement on permanent film.

Many young girls received a lasting memento of today's delivery. Smiles were available in abundant quantities, whether it was enjoying a new backpack, school supplies, or a unique photo. Nothing is staged in this environment . . . the smiles are real. Even skeptical teachers could not contain their joy . . . especially those who were able to grab some supplies for their own children, or who were lucky enough to be photographed.

Although I don't know what the 'Shelf Life' of a Polaroid Photo is, I'd be willing to bet that some of these children walked away with special memories that will last a lifetime.

## MERRY CHRISTMAS PHILLY

By 1st Lt. Monica Luongo

Demobilizing in September, many of the men from Philadelphia's 103<sup>rd</sup> Engineers came home from a year long tour in Iraq just in time to spend the holidays with family. Some of their fellow Soldiers from the Headquarters Company are still deployed however, spending their holiday in one of Iraq's hot-spots; Ramadi.

With today's technologies and the devotion of the families back home, the Philadelphia Soldiers were able to spend a few moments with their loved ones. For many, it was the first glimpse of their family in over seven months.

It is an annual event for the families and Soldiers of the 103<sup>rd</sup> Engineers to meet at the historic armory in the heart of University City. This weekend in December is filled with visits from decorated War Veterans, children running through the armory halls, a meal prepared by the outstanding 'Spoon Platoon' headed by Staff Sergeant Byrd and served by the Officer Corps, and of course cheer and good wishes of the holiday season are passed from one service member and his family to the next.

"It was a nice event for the families especially to see their loved ones," explains Major Chuck Kim, the Engineer's Executive Officer. "Christmas wouldn't have been the same without the HHC element present in some way."

The Family Support Group really pulled through for the Soldiers this year. Last holiday it was the Charlie Company from the 103<sup>rd</sup> who was away for the holidays. A local business, TO Epps & Assoc., donated toys and games for all the children of deployed Soldiers. This year, the time and effort from our own

families allowed for the opportunity to host a VTC – Video Television Conference from thousands of miles away.

Sergeant First Class Matt Runk was able to see his wife and daughters, Rebekkah 5 and Lexie 9, for the first time since June. "The deployment is tough on the kids," says Runk who went on to explain that his oldest is coping well and being able to see him at this point in the deployment was a good thing for all of them.

Besides the great support back home, the Soldiers from Philadelphia have each other this holiday season. "Being able to share that moment with the other Soldiers from the 103<sup>rd</sup> show how close of a family we all are out here," says Runk. Rather than personal VTC, all the 103<sup>rd</sup> Soldiers sat in the room together while individual families came on the screen from Philadelphia.

The memories from their tour in Iraq, including the long months preparing for it, will never be lost. The holidays are a time to be grateful for all we have. Whether near or far, loved ones are always in our heart.

Soldiers from the 103<sup>rd</sup> EN BN crowd the VTC to wish their families and friends a happy holiday.

Photo by 1st Lt. Monica R. Luongo



## GIVING SPIRIT

by 1st Lt Erik Leeds

At a time when thoughts of home and family are on the minds of many one soldier has brought the giving season to Ramadi. Spc. Samantha Hackett of the A Company Detachment 228FSB, here on Ramadi, will be the soldier giving smiles to the children of Ramadi.

With the help of her mother, Bonnie

Abrams, and Aunt Connie Blauser, they collected over 200 shoebox size plastic containers filled with goodies. The drive was conducted at two Pennsylvania businesses, KOA Speer Electronics and Case Cutlery. Employees donated the gift boxes which included hygiene items, school supplies, and small toys to name just a few items. Both companies were also generous enough to cover all the shipping costs as well.

To help distribute these gifts Spc. Hackett will go out with the 6<sup>th</sup> Civil Affairs Group and elements of the Iraqi Army to ensure an equal distribution. Even so far from home Soldiers and Marines can bring a smile to a child's face.

The Iraqi Army, helped pass out the shoe boxes that were sent. There was over 200 boxes made up.

Photo by Spc. Samantha Hackett



A young Iraqi girl, walks away with her supplies. The boxes contained school supplies, personal hygiene products and other useful items.

Photo by Spc. Samantha Hackett



# 2ND BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

## IRON SOLDIERS

### IN ACTION

Members of the 779th Maintenance Company, out of Centerville, Tennessee, built the highest bridge in Ramadi. For the Brigade's Headquarters Company.

*Photo by Spc. Sam Kerschner*



Spc. Jose Sanchez and Spc. Stephan Mason, both of Alpha Troop 1-109th, standing guard at an Observation Point, in Al Asad.

*Photo by Sgt. Charity Lewis*



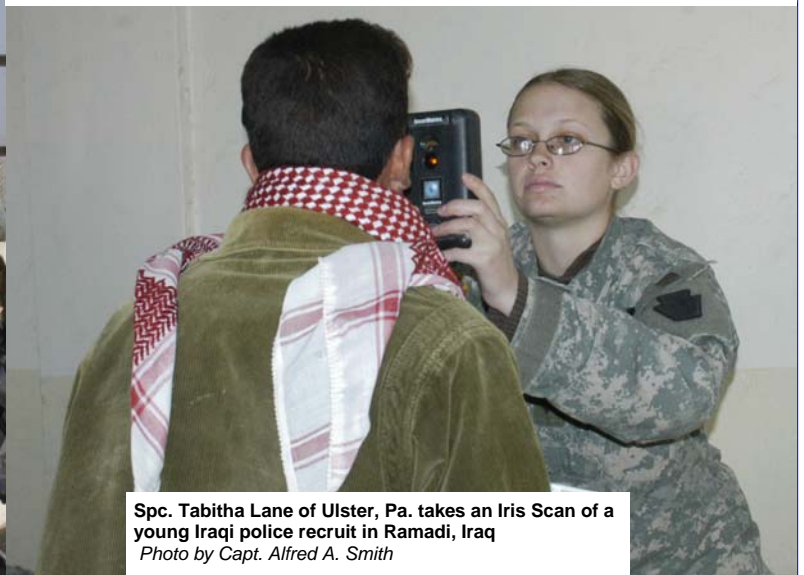
Spc. Jordan Sandlin and Spc. Patrick Kelly, Both of Alpha Troop 1-109th, stand watch at an observation point.

*Photo by Sgt. Charity Lewis*



Gunnery Sergeant Michael Burghardt, of Huntington Beach, Ca., takes some soldiers through IED training lane. He is a member of the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Team, 8th Engineer Support Battalion.

*Photo by MSG Walter Gray*



Spc. Tabitha Lane of Ulster, Pa. takes an Iris Scan of a young Iraqi police recruit in Ramadi, Iraq

*Photo by Capt. Alfred A. Smith*

Send your pics to SFC Scary (Richard.Scaricaciottoli@us.army.mil) Include a brief description and who took the pic.



# MERRY CHRISTMAS

Christmas in Iraq, 2005— The Iron Soldiers showed their true Christmas spirit. by dressing up and showing off their holiday decorations.

Many thanks go out to all of the families and friends that mailed care packages and Christmas cards. WE LOVE YOU

*Photos by Capt. Alfred A. Smith and Spc. Sam Kerschner*





# MERRY CHRISTMAS

Everyone is a kid on Christmas and the the Iron Soldiers are no exception. Sitting on Santa's lap, stealing presents from underneath the Christmas tree and eating some great chow is how the Iron Soldiers enjoyed Christmas.

Photos by Spc. Sam Kerschner and Submitted by 1st Lt. Monica Luango



Send your pics to SFC Scary (Richard.Scaricaciottoli@us.army.mil) Include a brief description and who took the pic.



# LOS TEX MANIACS

The Los Tex Maniacs came all the way from Texas to ring in 2006 for the Iron Soldiers. They are a Mexican Polka group from San Antonio. They performed all night and autographed pictures and CDs. There was also karaoke, salsa dancing and plenty of non-alcoholic beer to go around. HAPPY NEW YEAR 2006 FROM THE IRON SOLDIERS!!!!

*Photos by Spc. Sam Kerschner*





# A CHRISTMAS TREE FOR IRON SOLDIERS

by Sgt. Kristy Kroll



From left to right – Capt. Dirk Remensnyder, Retired Lt. Col. & Fox News Correspondent Oliver L. North, Spc. Raul Gomez, 1st Lt. Ryan Quinn and members of C-Med, share a few laughs around the Iron Soldiers' Christmas Tree.

Photo by Capt. Alfred A. Smith

The artistic abilities of Spc. Raul Gomez have again helped to boost morale at Charlie Med. Gomez and his motor pool friends have made their idea of a Christmas tree a reality. At first, one may not notice the different aspects of this Christmas tree. At a closer look, you will notice that the foliage of the tree consists of over 1,000 pounds of steel, with barbed wire for tinsel. For decoration, the Soldiers have adorned the tree with Christmas lights, candy canes, tools, 50-cal links, and shell casings. "There is no live ammo at all. We used what we had and made sure it was safe. Other companies donated decorations too," Gomez says.

The first step was to make a base that would support and balance the steel tree. Spc. Gomez and Pfc. Miller designed the snowflake-shaped pedestal. 1st Sgt. Held assisted using the plasma cutter to cut the snowflake design.

Many Soldiers from Charlie Company helped to assemble the tree. Sgt. Escopio cut notches in the trunk to allow the limbs to attach to the tree. Staff Sgt. Trinidad, Staff Sgt. Crum, Spc. Huber, and Spc. Bordelean all helped to cut and place the limbs on the tree. Spc. Gomez welded the snow-

flake base to the trunk of the tree. Pfc. Guzzon and Spc. Gomez created the top of the Christmas tree. "We all worked together after work hours, donated our time, and are proud of our work," said Gomez.

Since the beginning of our company's mobilization at Camp Shelby, Spc. Gomez has created many different works of art. He has a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Angelo State University in Texas. Gomez is most interested in painting, sculpting, graphic design, and ceramics.

At his home, in Easton, Pennsylvania, he has prepared hundreds of works of art. Throughout the deployment, Spc. Gomez has tried to create an atmosphere similar to that of his home. One such contribution is the patriotic design at the entrance to Charlie Med. In addition to his artistic contributions, he is a great asset to Charlie Company and the brigade through his extensive expertise in architecture and numerous forms of technology. Not only does Spc. Gomez maintain and calibrate the medical equipment at Charlie Med, he also resolves many of the mechanical and electrical issues.

We at Charlie Med are proud of the ingenuity and dedication of Spc. Raul Gomez and all who contributed their talent to brighten up this Christmas season.

**"NEARLY ALL MEN CAN STAND  
ADVERSITY, BUT IF YOU WANT TO  
TEST A MAN'S CHARACTER, GIVE  
HIM POWER."  
-- ABRAHAM LINCOLN**





## IRAQI ARMY ROCK THE VOTE

By 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

**HABBANIYAH, IRAQ** – On December 12, 2005 the Independent Electoral Committee of Iraq (IECI) came to Camp Habbaniyah East. The IECI made necessary arrangements in order to guarantee that Iraqi Soldiers securing freedom in the Al Anbar province had the opportunity to participate in the democratic process.

They arrived on Sunday, preparing for over two thousand Iraqi Army Soldiers to visit the polls early Monday morning. The IECI team of fifteen workers was well organized and conducted the verification and balloting procedures timely and effectively. The Iraqi Army officers and Soldiers that participated in the early election were a culmination of Iraqi Base Defense Soldiers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade IA Soldiers, and 1<sup>st</sup> Division Soldiers. All were equally as anxious to cast their votes and many a “Shukran – Thank You,” were

exchanged, appreciative of the IECI’s coordination.

On Thursday, December 15, 2005 the entire nation of Iraq, cast votes to elect a new parliament. There were election posters all over the towns and individuals rallying for nominees – the democratic process was alive and well in Habbaniyah. The IA supported the IECI’s 15 polling sites in their area of operations (AO) by providing a robust security presence in the towns and aiding voters that required assistance to and from the voting centers.

Task Force Panther and U.S. forces in the neighboring area of operations, provided backup security for the IA.

The new democratic government of Iraq began, its term December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

**An Iraqi Army Soldier shows off his national pride and purple finger after casting his ballot.**

Photo by 1st Lt. Antonia Greene



## COMBAT OUTPOST DUNLAP, DEDICATED

By 1st Lt. Antonia Greene



**Marine Sergeant Brian Enrique Dunlap**  
January 5, 1971 – September 24, 2005  
Photo submitted by 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

**HABBANIYAH, IRAQ** – On Thanksgiving Day, the two month anniversary of Sergeant Brian Dunlap’s passing, members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> BN Advisor team along with 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Division Iraqi Army (IA) dedicate the newly established combat outpost to their fallen brother.

Marine Infantry Sergeant Brian Dunlap was killed in action, September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005 while on a presence patrol in the Iraqi town of Abu Fliess in Al Anbar

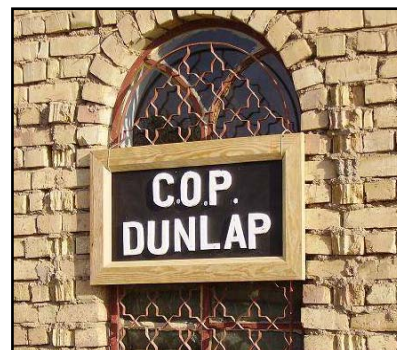
province, Iraq. Sgt. Dunlap was a member of the Military Transition Team (MiTT) assigned to 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade, 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> division Iraqi Army (IA). Sgt. Dunlap had just finished a similar assignment in Mosul, Iraq advising Iraqi troops before joining the Habbaniyah MiTT in June. Sgt. Dunlap spent 8 years active with the USMC, this was his first tour with the Marine reserve. He was a fireman at Camp Pendleton Fire and Emergency Services, Ocean Side, California. Sgt. Dunlap was a resident of San Diego, California; he was 34 years-old.

2-3-1 IA was ordered to establish a permanent presence in eastern Jazirah with the placement of a combat outpost (COP) across the Euphrates River. Simultaneously, 3-2-1 began to increase patrols in and around the area and develop a relationship with the community in order to disrupt, capture and kill enemy forces in the immediate area of operations (AO). COP Dunlap consists of 6 buildings that house the Soldiers and Battalion operations center.

Daily improvements are being made with the assistance of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The 74<sup>th</sup> MRBC (multi-role bridge company) aides in the transport of Soldiers and equipment from

FOB Habbaniyah to COP Dunlap across the Euphrates River. The 135<sup>th</sup> EN Company continues to work with the IA Soldiers to establish a viable perimeter defense in addition to the armed towers of COP Dunlap.

In memory of Sgt. Brian Dunlap, the new combat outpost signifies a promising venture into the unknown. 3<sup>rd</sup> brigade IA along with their Marine advisors are taking the fight out into the enemy’s territory. Getting control of Jazirah is a must for mission success in the AO. COP Dunlap serves as the beacon for future operations – shaping the battlefield and forcing the enemy out of the shadows.



**Combat Outpost Dunlap, provides a permanent presence in Jazirah.**  
Photo submitted by 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

# 167th CAV TROOPERS RECOGNIZED FOR VALOR

By 1st Lt. Rose Forrest

During the last month, A/1-167 Cav, a National Guard company from Nebraska held two awards ceremonies for Soldiers who were recognized for Valor.

On a ceremony held December 17, 2005, Capt. Jeffrey Searcy and 2nd Lt. Matthew Misfeldt were awarded Army Commendation Medals with the "V" device for Valor by Col. John Gronski, 2/ 28 BCT Commander, for their actions and leadership in a seven hour Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel (TRAP) mission.

Capt. Searcy, the A/1-167 Cav Commander was the On Scene Commander on November 2, 2005, when a AH-1W helicopter went down in Ar Ramadi, Iraq. Maj. Michael Grice, ANGLICO team chief recalling that day said, "Capt. Searcy... expertly coordinated the complicated and difficult events of that day." Capt. Searcy coordinated the actions of the Crash Fire Rescue, Combat Engineers, Explosive Ordnance Disposal team; personally led the security element that relieved the initial Quick Reaction Force on scene.

2nd Lt. Misfeldt, a platoon leader with A/1-167 Cav took his platoon, the BCT Quick Reaction Force known as "Wolverines", to the crash site to secure the area and set up a helicopter landing zone so that the Crash Fire Rescue and Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams could land. Maj. Grice reported, "He expertly positioned his forces to provide security for the recovery operation, including engaging insurgent forces on several occasions."

Together Capt. Searcy and 2nd Lt. Misfeldt's teams secured the crash site, recovered the sensitive equipment and killed pilots, and successfully extracted the 32 TRAP personnel from the objective area.

Col. Gronski, came out to the A/1-167 Cav area again on December 27, 2005 to award Sgt. Michael Belleci and Private 1st Class Nelson the Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for Valor in combat operations.

Sgt. Belleci was recognized for his actions on October 9, 2005, when he escorted and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team to the site of an unexploded Improvised Explosive Device (IED). When the team arrived they determined the robot used to dismantle the



Private 1st Class Darin Nelson (Left) and Sgt. Michael Belleci of Alpha Troop 1-167th Cavalry proudly display their Bronze Star Medals with "V" device for Valor in combat.  
Photo by 1st Lt. Rose Forrest

bombs would not work on the uneven terrain, and they would have to dismantle the base station manually. Sgt. Belleci escorted the EOD tech to the base station, which was booby trapped with a soviet fragmentation grenade.

As they approached, Sgt. Belleci heard the click of the release pin and reacted without hesitation. He threw himself between the grenade and the EOD technician and most likely saved his life. GySgt Michael Burghardt, the EOD chief said, "His reaction of putting himself between the danger and the Marine was a reflex which clearly shows his character."

"This action by Sgt. Belleci stands on its own as being the most an individual Soldier can give at any time for his unit, God, and country," said Capt. Searcy, who was at the ceremony to assist Col Gronski in pinning the medal on his Soldiers.

Private 1st Class Nelson was also awarded a Bronze Star for Valor for his conduct in the face of the enemy. On August 28, 2005, Private 1st Class Nelson was part of a quick reaction force that responded to an Observation Point which had been attacked outside of Ar Ramadi. He arrived on the scene to find a burning Humvee and two wounded Soldiers.

Private 1st Class Nelson grabbed a fire extinguisher and attempted to put the fire out, even though ammunition stored

inside the Humvee began exploding. When the extinguisher was exhausted and the fire simmering out, Private 1st Class Nelson ran to the wounded Soldiers.

Rounds were still exploding just feet away from Private 1st Class Nelson as he triaged and treated the Soldiers. As a trained Combat Lifesaver, Private 1st Class Nelson used available first aid materials until the medics arrived.

Capt. Searcy said, "Private 1st Class Nelson deserves such recognition for his actions of bravery and decisiveness in helping two fellow Soldiers in contact with the enemy."



2nd Lt. Matthew Misfeldt receives his Army Commendation Medal with "V" device for Valor in combat from 2/28 BCT Commander John L. Gronski.



# TEACHER AND STUDENT SERVE TOGETHER

by Sgt. Julie Nicolov

CAMP CORREGIDOR, AR RAMADI, Iraq - At this time last year, Staff Sgt. Robert McDonald, a tanker with Animal Company, 3rd Battalion, 103rd Armor Regiment, Pennsylvania Army National Guard, was teaching seventh and eighth grade students at Tri-Valley High School about ancient civilizations in the Middle East.

This year, he's experiencing those cultures firsthand during his deployment to Camp Corregidor in Ramadi, Iraq.

"I'm learning a lot about the ancient culture here, which we cover in my class," said McDonald, who lives in Millersburg, Pa.

He's also sharing this education with one of his former students.

"I still call him 'Mr. McDonald,'" said Spc. Jen Renninger, medic, Charlie Company, 2nd Forward Support Battalion, 28th Division Support Command, Pennsylvania Army National Guard. "I tell him, 'you're Mr. McDonald, even though you're Staff Sgt. McDonald now.'"

Seeing her former teacher as a Soldier is not much of a stretch for Renninger as she remembers how he ran his classroom.

**"It makes a difference who you're here with," Renninger said. "We're really close-knit; like one big family."**

"He was a disciplinarian," said Renninger, who lives in Higgins, Pa.

Renninger's seventh grade history class was the first of McDonald's teaching career. Before that, he was an infantryman for two years with 187th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

After serving on active duty, McDonald graduated college and joined the Pennsylvania Army National Guard.

"I figured I'd have a tough time getting a teaching job, so I went into the guard," McDonald said. "As soon as I joined the guard, I got a job at Tri-Valley."

McDonald joined the faculty in 1993 after the school year was already in session. Renninger's class proved to be a trial-by-fire for the new teacher.

"We were a horrible class to him," Renninger said. "We used to tease him

about his balding hair, so all the girls in my grade cut parts of their hair off and gave it to him."

Even with their pranks, McDonald appreciates the *joie de vivre* of students in that age group.

"They're just so full of life and fun," McDonald said. "Everything is fun to them."

The lessons that McDonald taught in his history class have shed some light on what Renninger sees in Iraq.

"He dealt a lot with the Muslim religion and the Middle East," Renninger said. "We learned a lot about the Shiites versus the Sunni, too."

McDonald's former service with the 101st Airborne Division also influenced his students as they made plans for their futures.

"Kids always ask me about the military as an option after high school," McDonald said. "I don't know if it's because of me that they're here."

Renninger joined the military because someone in her family served in every American war since the Revolution. She re-enlisted last year to be with her company in support of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*.

"I really would have felt bad knowing that my company was coming over here and I had just gotten out," Renninger said.

Renninger is deployed to Camp Ramadi, which is on the other side of the city from Camp Corregidor. She recently spent two weeks at Camp Corregidor as part of the Lioness Team, a group of female Soldiers tasked with



Staff Sgt. Robert McDonald, a tanker with TF 2-69 Animal Company, 3rd Battalion, 103rd Armor Regiment and a teacher in the Tri-Valley, Pa. School District shares a moment with one of his former students, Spc. Jen Renninger, a medic with Charlie Company, 2nd Forward Support Battalion, 28th Division Support Command.

Photo Submitted by Sgt. Julie Nicolov

searching Iraqi women at Coalition checkpoints set up throughout the city.

Seeing her former teacher as a Soldier was not odd but she admits that hanging out with him as an adult was a strange experience.

"The first night I was at Camp Corregidor, I went over to the company area. Everyone was sitting around smoking cigarettes and telling war stories and I thought, 'This is odd,'" Renninger said.

The strangeness wore off and now teacher, student, and the rest of the Pa. Army National Guard Soldiers in Ramadi have banded together to make the place more like home.

"It makes a difference who you're here with," Renninger said. "We're really close-knit; like one big family."

Other former students of McDonald's are also serving in Iraq. He hopes they use this challenging time to be thankful for every day they have.

"It's like that Tim McGraw song, 'Live Like You Were Dying.' Do what you want to do when you want to do it," McDonald said.

This deployment has had a huge effect on Renninger's future plans.

"I want to do everything. What's there to limit you after being here?" Renninger asked.

# THE SAFETY CORNER

## SAFETY SCENARIOS

This month we are going to do something a little different for the Safety Corner. Over the past several months the Safety Office has been tracking on several Tactical issues that we want to bring to the attention of all Soldiers. Below are a couple scenarios for you to review. Our hope is to get patrols talking openly about the possibilities of the unexpected happening. These situations have already happened. I encourage patrol leaders to review the scenarios and discuss the actions to be taken. The key here is having everyone on the same page. One patrol may have a completely different reaction, but if EVERYONE follows through then the risk for increased injury or damage can be significantly reduced.

### Brief T.T.P Scenario #1

You are the 3rd Vehicle in a 4 Vehicle Patrol. You are driving down the MSR at 45 MPH. You are 50 meters behind the vehicle in front of you and the vehicle behind you is 35 meters back. An IED explodes on the driver's side of the vehicle. Your vehicle rolls on the passenger side, in the middle of the road. The gunner is partially ejected from the vehicle. Dust from the explosion obstructs the view of the vehicle traveling behind you.

1. What are the actions of the vehicle traveling behind you?
2. How will you inform the vehicle behind that the gunner is in the road?
3. What are your steps to get the casualties evacuated?
4. What are the steps to provide security:
  - In an open area with traffic?
  - In the center of an urban area?

### Brief T.T.P Scenario #2

You are the 4th Vehicle in a 4 Vehicle Patrol. You are driving down the MSR at 45 MPH. You are 35 meters behind the vehicle in front of you. An IED explodes on the driver's side of the vehicle in front of you causing the vehicle roll to the passenger side in the middle of the road. The gunner is partially ejected from the vehicle. Dust from the explosion obstructs your view of the rolled vehicle.

1. How do you know the vehicle rolled in front of you?
2. What are your actions with limited visibility due to the dust from the IED?
3. What actions are done if a second IED is discovered while providing security for the rolled vehicle?
4. What are the actions of the lead and second vehicles after the IED explodes?

The Safety Office is very interested in feedback on the scenarios, as well as other scenarios to send out to the Brigade. Feel free to send us experiences with actions taken, or "Shoulda, woulda, couldas". The goal is to learn from experiences and share the successes.

On a second note, just a reminder that wet weather is upon us. Mission planners must take the canals and desert roads into consideration. Use the Risk Assessment to assist in developing controls to reduce the risk to Soldiers and Marines. A leader must follow through on the controls. Make sure the mission needs outweigh the risks when planning the routes.



# GENERAL CRAIG, VISITS TROOPS

by Capt. Alfred Smith & 1st Lt. Antonia Greene

**CAMP RAMADI, Iraq** – Major General Wesley E. Craig, Commanding General of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M), Pennsylvania Army National Guard, could not think of a better place to spend his Christmas holiday than with the brave men and women fighting for freedom in Iraq.

Gen. Craig made it a point to visit as many camps in the AL Anbar Province on December 27, 28 and 29, 2005. His mission was clear; to personally thank the Soldiers, Marines, Airmen and Sailors that are in Iraq fighting in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"You brave men and women are the main effort in this war against terrorism. All of you are in a very unique situation, there is no doubt in my mind that we selected the best team for this campaign," said Maj. Gen. Craig, prior to accepting a precious gift [An American Flag that flew over Camp Ramadi, Iraq] from the 2/28 BCT Commander Col. John L. Gronski.

Gen. Craig briefed the brigade staff on the current changes that are shaping the future of the 28<sup>th</sup> Division in Pennsylvania and he commented on how crucial it is for the 28<sup>th</sup> ID (M) – The Oldest Division in the armed forces – to take care of and hold on to its combat veterans. "It is very important that all of you bring your leadership qualities, your knowledge and your skills, and share them with all the Soldiers back home."

Additionally, Gen. Craig highlighted the great efforts that have been made by the Brigade's maintenance team; B Company 228 FSB located at Camp Taqaddum (TQ) and D779 Maintenance Company located at Camp Ramadi. "The Iron Brigade has the best maintenance program that I have ever seen," said Gen. Craig as he commented on the 94% Operational readiness rate that has been achieved by the Iron Soldiers.

From TQ and Ramadi the 28<sup>th</sup> ID Commanding General stopped to visit the brave men and women of TF Panther 1-110<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry at Camp Habbaniyah. There, he spent the majority of his time speaking with the servicemen and service-women about their particular missions.



Charlie Medical Company Commander, Capt. Dirk Remensnyder explains some of the medical procedures to Gen. Wesley E. Craig, prior to taking the General on a tour of the C-Med facility at Camp Ramadi, Iraq.

Photo by Spc. Sam Kerschner

He visited C Co. 1-103<sup>rd</sup> Armor at the tank hangar and congratulated the tankers and mechanics for the superb job they are doing to keep the main supply route (MSR) secure and free of IEDs. Additionally he discussed hardships and availability of resources available to them. He interacted with the Soldiers in order to get situational awareness and have a good feel for the atmospherics in their area of operation.

Maj. Gen. Craig also spent time with A Co. 1-110<sup>th</sup> Infantry, again engaging Soldiers about life out in sector and encouraging them to stay focused.



Maj. Gen. Wesley E. Craig presents a 28th Division coin to Maj. Joni Johnson from Stafford, Virginia.

Photo by Spc. Samantha Kerschner

Alpha Company continues to conduct targeted area patrols, cordon and knocks, and a variety of specialized missions within AO Panther. 1st Lt. Susick, 1<sup>st</sup> platoon Scout Commander of A Co. 1-110<sup>th</sup> Infantry described the events of a recent fire fight that he and his platoon incurred the afternoon prior to the General's visit.

After completing his whirlwind tour of the combat bases in Al Anbar, Gen. Craig prepared for his trip back to the States eager to highlight the great accomplishment and sacrifices that are being made everyday by the brave men and women fighting for the U.S.A. in Iraq.

It was nice to see a familiar face from home and it was made more special because the familiar face belonged to the Commanding General of the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division (M). Gen. Craig could have chosen to stay back in Pennsylvania but instead he chose to spend his Christmas holiday with the Iron Soldier of the 2/28 BCT Iron Brigade.

**From the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors and Airmen in Iraq – ROLL ON!**



## FROM THE BRIGADE SERGEANT MAJOR



Command Sgt. Maj.  
Horace C. Pysher

As I have traveled to the different FOBs and around Camp Ramadi, I have seen how each unit and each individual is bringing the Christmas spirit to one another here in Iraq. It is that spirit of faith in one another that has allowed us the success we have had to date on this mission.

We all will wake up Christmas morning thinking of our family and friends, wishing we could be with them to share this holiday. However, we will be with our new family and friends here in Iraq, ensuring those we hold so dear to us can continue to live in peace this holiday season and experience freedom. It is Freedom that is man's greatest gift to his fellow man. You the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines have made a great sacrifice this past year; that is your Christmas gift to the people of Iraq and America. That gift has come with a price that we will never forget. That price is the sacrifice of each Soldier, Marine, Sailor, and Airman who gave their life for freedom.

Let us remember their families and all of our families for the dedication and support they have given us while we have been on this mission. Without that support you could not be here doing the great job you are currently doing. Please thank them each day for being there and giving us that spirit to continue this mission.

I am very proud each and every one of you that make up the 2/28 BCT and just as proud of each family member who has stood behind these great Americans so they can defend that Christmas gift – FREEDOM.

Wishing all of you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**“Iron Soldiers”**

## FROM THE BRIGADE CHAPLAIN

### A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE



Maj. Peter J. Lawson  
Brigade Chaplain

This is the season of hope and expectation in the life of the Christian church. It began with the season of Advent, the four Sundays before Christmas, and culminates with the celebration of the birth of Jesus. The word Advent means “coming toward,” and it describes that period in which people looked for the day when their promise of God would be fulfilled. One of the more well known passages of scripture describing this period comes from the prophet Isaiah who wrote, as one standing on tip-toes, looking toward the future, “For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulder; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace....He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.” (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Of course, that does not sound like a world we are familiar with, and especially for those Soldiers serving this deployment in this theatre of operations in Iraq. For just about every Soldier in the 2/28 BCT, Christmas 2005 will be radically different than Christmas 2004. Sometimes it is challenging to match up the sentiment of our lives with the hope-filled messages we see portrayed in the Bible. Perhaps it would do us well to consider that the people who received this message were living in difficult circumstances as well. The Israelite people were without a homeland. Their city and Temple had been razed to the ground. Many of them had been taken captive to live in a foreign land. But still they were hopeful. They prepared the way of the Lord, regardless of their circumstances.

We need this season to remind us of something important: hope is not a feeling, it is a choice. When we are confronted with disappointment, or the struggles of being far from home, or when the pieces of the puzzle of our lives don't fall neatly into place, that is when we must *choose* to be hopeful, not cynical. The cynical way is the easy way. The cynic always finds what he's looking for, the bad instead of the good. It takes discipline to be hopeful, and effort. Hope, as I heard it described, is the conviction that something better is coming. That's why hope is the driving force of life. And when the “Word became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14), we have to believe that not simply had something better come, but the best had come. To put in simply, the incarnation of God – God becoming one of us, is hope wrapped in human flesh. There could be no better news for us right now in this place during this season, than this.



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## GEN VINES' CHRISTMAS VISIT

by Capt. Alfred A. Smith

C A M P R A M A D I , Iraq— "You will remember this Christmas for the rest of your lives because of what you accomplished here in Iraq," said Lt. Gen. John R. Vines to the Iron Soldiers of the 2/28 BCT, on Christmas morning.

Lt. Gen. Vines came to Camp Ramadi to personally thank the Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen for the great accomplishments and the many sacrifices that they have made in Al Anbar Province, specifically in Ramadi; a former insurgent stronghold.

**The Iraqi Army and the 2/28 BCT had a huge challenge in the way of a Constitutional Referendum and December 15<sup>th</sup> Election**

Lt. Gen. Vines commented on the historic implications of the recent events that took place in Al Anbar, "The Iraqi Army and the 2/28 BCT had a huge challenge in the way of a



Lt. Gen. John R. Vines spends time with Soldiers of TF Saber 1-172 Armor after inspecting some of their Bradley Fighting Vehicles. Left to Right - Spc. James Martin, Staff Sgt. Jonathan Weaver, Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, Sgt. Ervin Aulis and 1st Lt. Christopher Wilson.  
Photo by Spc. Sam Kerschner

Constitutional Referendum and December 15<sup>th</sup> Election," he said.

He stressed the importance of staying focused and seeing the mission through. He encouraged all of the Iron Soldiers to keep up their great attitudes and to look out for each other.

With 2006 right around the corner,

Lt. Gen. Vines looked into the future and spoke of the great opportunities that will present themselves for the people of Iraq. He mentioned that with the establishment of an elected government for the citizens of Iraq, the focus will now turn to the people of Iraq to develop their country.

"I'm proud to be here this Christmas Day, December 25, 2005; what you are doing is important for all of our future generations." he said prior to heading to the landing zone.

No stranger to Ramadi, this is the second time that Lt. Gen. Vines has visited the Iron Brigade; he made an earlier stop to Camp Ramadi on August 24, 2005.

The Soldiers, Marines, Sailors, and Airmen of the 2/28 BCT would like to thank Lt. Gen. John R. Vines for spending this special holiday with the men and women that wear the combat uniform at Camp Ramadi Iraq.

### Have a story or picture for the Iron Soldiers?



Contributions from all Soldiers throughout the 2nd Brigade Combat Team are encouraged for consideration. Please enclose a detailed description of the people (name, rank and unit) and subject matter for each story and photo. Include your name, unit and contact information.

Contact your unit Public Affairs Rep located on the left side of this page or send an email to [richard.scariaciottoli@us.army.mil](mailto:richard.scariaciottoli@us.army.mil)





*In Memory Of*  
**Sergeant 1st Class Brent Adams**  
*Headquarters Company, 2nd Brigade Combat Team*

# REST IN PEACE, WARRIORS



*In Memory Of*  
**Specialist Brian Wright**  
*135th Engineer Company, 876th Engineers*



*In Memory Of*  
**Corporal Joseph Bier**  
*Lima Company, 3rd Battalion - 7th Marines*



*In Memory Of*  
**Sergeant Spencer Akers**  
*Bravo Company, 1st Battalion - 125th Infantry*



*In Memory Of*  
**Sergeant Keith Bennett**  
*28th Military Police*



*In Memory Of*  
**Sergeant Kenneth Pospisil**  
*Explosive Ordnance Detachment*



*In Memory Of*  
**Lance Corporal Samuel Tapia**  
*Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion - 7th Marines*